

CHARITABLE GAMING HIGHLIGHT\$

2007 Volume 20, No. 2

The “Revitalizing Bingo” Issue

During the months of August and September, representatives from Trade Products, Bingo King, and Arrow International worked in partnership with the Michigan Lottery to hold the first ever bingo revitalization workshops. These were held at eight locations around the state, with one third of the bingos and licensed halls represented. The feedback was *overwhelmingly positive* as those who attended the seminars talked about implementing many of the ideas presented or discussing them with their committees.



Each licensee's purpose is to generate money for their organization through charitable gaming; therefore, to be successful, licensees need to think and operate like a business. This issue of HIGHLIGHT\$ is dedicated to covering some of the topics discussed at the workshops—acquiring new players, retaining players, customer service, and improving your bottom line. We recommend those involved in managing a bingo hall or running a bingo game read each section thoughtfully and determine which actions you will take to begin revitalizing bingo.

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Acquiring Players

*Abandon the mentality
of luring bingo players
from other games.*

Probably the most difficult challenge facing those who run a bingo game is to abandon the mentality of luring bingo players from other games. The first problem is the number of people that play bingo is quickly diminishing. Secondly, undercutting each other on bingo packages causes everyone to lose and is continually weakening the bingo industry. To create a healthy market that will sustain bingo, the focus *must* shift to attracting the millions of people that do not yet play bingo.

WHO ARE POTENTIAL PLAYERS?

National Bingo Night, a reality TV game show that aired last summer, allowed viewers to play bingo from the comfort of their own homes. Viewers were able to download free bingo cards from the internet, print them, and play along on game night. During its six episodes, over 170 million bingo cards were downloaded from ABC's website. It's interesting to note that just before each game—when traffic on the website was at its maximum capacity—many were unable to access the website. Who knows just how many more cards would have been downloaded had the site not been overloaded! When home viewers were later polled, it was determined that the majority were not regular bingo players. Interest from potential players is apparent.

Baby boomers have become the largest segment of the population and are beginning to retire. Smart businesses pay attention to this market, knowing baby boomers hold the most in discretionary income.


College campuses are full of young people who are looking for new ways to have fun. Unfortunately, most students are unaware of bingo in their area because bingos are not marketed to them. They do not read the Bingo Bugle. No ads are in their campus newspaper or posted on their announcement boards. Also, most radio stations don't promote the evening's bingo games.

COMING TOGETHER

Finding new players will require creative marketing and a pooling of resources. There is obviously strength (and buying power) in numbers; bingo and hall licensees in a given area will be far more empowered if they work together to market bingo in their area. Open the lines of communication for the good of your organization and for the good of the industry. Contact other bingos and halls in your community. Meet regularly to strengthen your partnership and brainstorm ways in which to market bingo. Pool your resources together and *think big*.



Commissioner Sunil of ABC's National Bingo Night
Photo courtesy of reviewjournal.com.



CHARITABLE GAMING
HIGHLIGHTS

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MEDIA

Consider billboards, radio ads, TV ads, and newspapers. A website can provide a list of bingos in your community and any special events or activities happening at each of the locations. Flyers are inexpensive and can be distributed to many locations, including stores, college campuses, salons, hospitals, laundromats, gas stations, and apartment complexes to name a few. Your flyer should welcome new players. Don't use bingo lingo, such as "early birds" and "books." Include the hours, location, and food specials. Promote the social environment. On the back of the flyer provide simple instructions and helpful hints for new players so they know what to expect. Offer a training session prior to bingo.



OUTDOOR SIGNAGE

All bingo locations should be both obvious and inviting. Except where restricted by local ordinances, a bingo sign should be near a main road and large enough to be noticed. Changeable letter signs are extremely valuable in advertising times, jackpot amounts, and special events. Be sure the information on your changeable letter sign can be understood by non-bingo players—and make it exciting!

PHONE RECORDINGS

All bingo halls should have a message that plays when the phone is not answered. If someone has taken the time to contact your hall, they deserve to get the information they need.



The hall message should be recorded by someone with a clear, friendly voice. Provide the days and times of bingo, any food specials, special events, and jackpot amounts. Encourage the caller to come play bingo and say that new players are welcome.



All advertising must include the name of the organization, the license number, and the purpose for which the proceeds will be used.

Got Balls?

NEW CHARITY GAME TICKET REVEALED

Lucky Bingo Balls is now the fastest selling charity game for both large and small bingos. It is a clever way to add prizes to your bingo program without increasing the bingo prize amounts. Here is a typical experience at a bingo game that includes Lucky Bingo Balls:

After looking over their bingo cards, players quickly scan their bingo ball tickets for the balls being called. Excitement mounts as many players have now daubed at least one of the three bingo balls on their Lucky Bingo Balls ticket. Suddenly from the back of the room, a player yells, "Balls!" The bingo game is suspended and the floor worker calls back the numbers, "I-27, N-42, O-71." The caller responds, "That's a good set of balls!" And the crowd breaks into laughter! One happy ticket holder is paid and the bingo game continues.

Twenty-five tickets, each containing three random bingo balls, are included in every deal. Multiple deals may be played with a bingo game or play the game before bingo starts. If you haven't tried it, don't miss out any longer!

Game instructions are on our website under charity game tickets or talk to your charity game ticket supplier.



Retaining Players

When a new player walks into a bingo hall, there is only one opportunity to make a first impression. Seize the moment. Ensure all has been done to give each new player a good experience.



GREETER

Designate a worker to stand near the entrance to welcome all players with a smile. (It works for Wal-Mart!) It is also up to the greeter to recognize new players, help them out, and ensure other workers are aware of new players and ready to provide extra assistance. If you are short volunteers, solicit one of your friendly regular players to be a greeter for the day. A worker that wishes to work until the first ball is drawn may do so if they purchase their bingo cards in the same manner as other players. However, workers cannot buy charity game tickets on that day.

UNIFORMS

Presenters and staff at the August and September workshops wore matching shirts and nametags, giving a visual example of the value of worker identification. Providing matching t-shirts to your volunteers or asking that they wear specific colors (like Target employees) gives them a feeling of being part of a team. It also makes it easy for new players to identify the workers.



CLEAN HALLS

The hall should be cleaned regularly. Cleaning expectations should be detailed in the rental agreement. The restroom floor is an area commonly overlooked by a cleaning crew, yet a dirty floor is very noticeable. When the floor is freshly mopped, the room looks and smells cleaner. Also, pay extra attention to the food counters and tables.

NON-SMOKING

You've invested time and money to attract the general public to bingo. Three out of four adults do not smoke. If those in charge of your hall do not take steps to ensure a player's experience can be smoke-free, you've wasted your investment.

Sooner or later state law will ban smoking in public facilities. It is wise for hall owners and managers to work with the bingo in taking proactive measures to minimize the shock of implementing such a law.

Take steps now to accommodate non-smokers. If you have an enclosed non-smoking room, strongly consider making it your smoking room. Non-smokers should have access to the concessions and restrooms without being exposed to smoke. The old smoking area is now available to freshen up. Paint the walls; clean off the light fixtures; and remove, clean, or replace fabric fixtures—such as flags and banners. Some smokers will choose to refrain from smoking and move to the non-smoking area.

Always be considerate of smokers. Smokers have represented the majority of bingo players for over 20 years. Many will be sensitive to any changes relating to a smoking policy. Be open with players and solicit input. Brainstorm ways in which to make a smoking room fun and convenient.

When a ban is implemented—provide one or two extra breaks, and if allowed by the language in the legislation, build a smoke shack outside and install speakers. Take advantage of the opportunity to market to 75% of the population. Advertise to the public—"Play Bingo—NOW NON-SMOKING!!!" And be sure that when new players step into the hall, it no longer has traces of smoke smells or stains.

FRESH PAINT

Walls should be painted every 1-2 years for smoking areas and as needed to keep walls clean. Avoid using stark colors or nicotine yellow. Opt for bold, rich color schemes. For articles and ideas on colors, see HIGHLIGHT\$ 2005, Volume 18, No. 2, which is posted on our website at www.michigan.gov/cg.

CONCESSION

The concession, whether run by the organization or a licensed hall, can develop a menu that compliments any theme or promotion. Search out food items that are both convenient and nutritious. Keep the concession area clean, orderly, and attractive. Neon signs and occasional announcements by the caller draw extra people to the concession.

REMIND PLAYERS TO COME BACK

Distribute event calendars that list your bingo events. Incorporate theme nights and special promotions. Work with other bingos at your location or in your area to create a calendar that is full and action-packed. Don't forget to include advertising information required by the rules.

Customer Service

With each player that walks into the bingo hall comes the opportunity to impress, satisfy, or disappoint. Setting the goal to impress increases the chance that your players will return.

Charitable bingos have one big advantage over casino bingos—the ability to get to know customers by name. Workers should take the time to know their customers, greet them using their name, and show interest in them as a person.

SMILE--Workers should develop a habit of smiling. It breaks down barriers, develops trust, and it's free.

LISTEN--Hear a player out and do everything possible to make a wrong situation right. If you don't have the answer, find someone who does as soon as possible.

APPRECIATE--Always thank players for coming. Their money could have been spent somewhere else.

Improving Your Bottom Line

Take the time to evaluate your financial records. Break down your expenses to determine if each expense is realistic. If a game does not generate enough revenue to cover its related expenses, strongly consider eliminating or replacing it. Paying out too much in prizes might attract players but will do more harm than good. And games that cost more than they bring in can be devastating to your bingo. Do not rely on charity game ticket sales to dig your bingo out of the red. The purpose of charitable gaming is to generate revenue for your organization, not to merely exist.

USING THE ODDS

There is a large variety of ways in which a player may bingo. The odds of a player having a bingo on a specific pattern (crazy T, outside box, etc.) vary. You can structure your program so that on a specific game the prize amount is determined by which pattern the bingo was made on (\$50 for a T or \$200 for a Christmas tree). For some games, the prize amount is determined by the column in which the last ball is called. (Learn about the column-based games.) Games are also designed based on the number of balls needed for a bingo. Multi-colored sheets can be used for a game where the prize amount varies based on which color the bingo was made on. Consult with your supplier to learn more about using odds to spice up your program.

CONCEALED NUMBERS

Bingo rules allow for the sale of bingo cards in which the bingo numbers are concealed (a.k.a. Bonanza Bingo). It is only with this type of bingo card that sales can occur after the first ball is drawn. Before the bingo session begins, draw 40 numbers, post them, and set aside the remaining balls. During the bingo event, continue selling Bonanza Bingo cards. Play the remainder of the Bonanza Bingo game near the end of the event to allow for maximum paper sales. An alternate method is to allow players to "trade-in" Bonanza Bingo cards that don't look too promising for a replacement at a cheaper price. If trade-ins are allowed, the replacement cards must be a different color for accountability purposes.

One Million Dollars in Winnings

Big Money Bingo players in Michigan are winning big money! As of November 8, 2007, fourteen lucky winners have taken home more than \$1,000,000 in total jackpot prizes. Winners have come from across the entire state, including the Upper Peninsula. The largest jackpot was \$215,696, with the average jackpot coming in at \$84,920. On average, the Big Money Bingo jackpot has been won in only 49 numbers. Below is a list of all fourteen Big Money Bingo winners:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>City</u>	<u># of Calls</u>
11/8/07	\$64,392	Janet Parrill	Adrian	47
10/18/07	\$79,840	Connie Moons	Warren	50
9/25/07	\$72,331	Lavern Heinzerling	Monroe	50
9/4/07	\$23,697	Anonymous	Flint	45
8/30/07	\$112,208	Marjorie Westman	Negaunee	52
8/3/07	\$41,576	Debbie Barrett	Flint	50
7/26/07	\$132,581	Nina Krygier	Irons	49
6/29/07	\$84,105	Bobbie DeLaCruz	Adrian	50
6/16/07	\$120,821	Jackie Alcorta	Adrian	50
6/12/07	\$59,466	Phyllis Gamble	Lewiston	48
5/24/07	\$215,696	Virginia Jones	Detroit	47
5/1/07	\$50,826	Sharon Tedford	Flint	47
4/21/07	\$63,540	Barbara Boutell	Macomb	51
4/4/07	\$67,804	Renee Kingsbury	Owosso	50

Big Money Bingo is a linked progressive bingo game that is available at select charitable bingo locations throughout the state. The jackpot starts at \$10,000 and grows each day until it is won. The progressive draw begins at 49 balls drawn and if not won, the number of balls drawn increases by one each week. To find a Big Money Bingo game visit our website at www.michigan.gov/cg. Look for the Big Money Bingo logo or search the bingo locator.

Administrative Action

May 1, 2007

Bingo License Surrendered
Akiva Hebrew Day School,
Southfield



Elvis

has been sighted at bingos!



**Talk to your supplier about
seeing him for yourself.**

Suspended Licenses

Organization Name	City	Violation(s)	Length	Date	License
MOSCOW FIREFIGHTERS	Moscow	Failure to maintain accurate/current records; worker pay records incomplete and/or worker pay exceeds limits; failure to maintain all game records; failure to account for all funds.	2 weeks	5/27/07	Bingo
WOLVERINE SPORTS & CONSERVATION CLUB (A21510)	Livonia	Failure to document loans; failure to have invoices or receipts for expenditures; monies expended for unauthorized and/or non-charitable purposes.	2 weeks	6/10/07	Bingo
MOORE APARTMENT NONPROFIT HOUSING CORPORATION	Lansing	Probation violations; failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds; commingling tickets.	3 weeks	6/24/07	Bingo
WOLVERINE SPORTS & CONSERVATION CLUB (A21511)	Livonia	Failure to document loans; failure to have invoices or receipts for expenditures; monies expended for unauthorized and/or non-charitable purposes.	2 weeks	6/24/07	Bingo
WOLVERINE SPORTS & CONSERVATION CLUB (A21512)	Livonia	Failure to document loans; failure to have invoices or receipts for expenditures; monies expended for unauthorized and/or non-charitable purposes.	2 weeks	7/8/07	Bingo
MOORE NONPROFIT HOUSING CORP. (A04042)	Lansing	Probation violations; failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds.	5 weeks	7/15/07	Bingo
VFW 8215	Shepherd	Failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds.	1 week	7/15/07	Annual CGT
MOKA CORPORATION	Muskegon Heights	Failure to deposit proceeds into licensee's financial account; monies expended for unauthorized and/or non-charitable purposes.	3 months	7/15/07	All
WOLVERINE SPORTS & CONSERVATION CLUB (A21513)	Livonia	Failure to document loans; failure to have invoices or receipts for expenditures; monies expended for unauthorized and/or non-charitable purposes.	2 weeks	7/22/07	Bingo
WOLVERINE SPORTS & CONSERVATION CLUB (A21514)	Livonia	Failure to document loans; failure to have invoices or receipts for expenditures; monies expended for unauthorized and/or non-charitable purposes.	2 weeks	8/5/07	Bingo
VFW 4063	Perry	Failure to deposit proceeds timely; failure to account for all funds.	3 weeks	8/5/07	Annual CGT
MOORE NONPROFIT HOUSING CORP. (A21235)	Lansing	Probation violations; failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds.	5 weeks	8/19/07	Bingo
EAGLES 4290	Jonesville	Failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to deposit proceeds timely; failure to account for all funds.	1 week	8/26/07	Annual CGT
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A21135)	Farmington	Failure to follow directive for Michigan progressive jackpot bingo game; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	4 weeks	8/26/07	Bingo
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A21136)	Farmington	Failure to follow directive for Michigan progressive jackpot bingo game; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	4 weeks	9/23/07	Bingo
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A21474)	Farmington	Failure to follow directive for Michigan progressive jackpot bingo game; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	4 weeks	10/21/07	Bingo
HUMANE SOCIETY & ANIMAL RESCUE (A21404)	Muskegon	Failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds.	3 weeks	10/28/07	Bingo
NOAH PROJECT (A20954)	Muskegon	Failure to follow the bureau's voiding directive; proceeds not deposited in a timely manner; failure to account for all funds; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	3 weeks	11/18/07	Bingo
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A21255)	Farmington	Failure to follow directive for Michigan progressive jackpot bingo game; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	4 weeks	11/18/07	Bingo
HUMANE SOCIETY & ANIMAL RESCUE (A21170)	Muskegon	Failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds.	3 weeks	11/18/07	Bingo
ST. EDWARDS ON THE LAKE CHURCH	Lakeport	Failure to maintain accurate/current records; failure to account for all funds.	2 weeks	11/18/07	Bingo
NOAH PROJECT (A21084)	Muskegon	Failure to follow the bureau's voiding directive; failure to account for all funds; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	3 weeks	12/9/07	Bingo
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A21253)	Farmington	Failure to follow directive for the Michigan progressive jackpot bingo game; failure to maintain accurate/current records.	4 weeks	12/16/07	Bingo
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A21140)	Farmington	Failure to maintain accurate/current records.	2 weeks	1/13/08	Bingo
IRISH AMERICAN UNITY CONF. DETROIT (A04608)	Farmington	Failure to maintain accurate/current records.	2 weeks	1/27/08	Bingo



Area Training Sessions

Charitable Gaming inspection staff conduct statewide training sessions for licensees covering topics such as recordkeeping, rules, and accountability. We encourage you to attend meetings in your area to stay current on the latest charitable gaming news and requirements.

The following training meetings will cover raffles, millionaire parties, bingo, and charity game tickets. All meetings begin at 12 noon. This schedule is subject to change, so please check our website at www.michigan.gov/cg for the most current list of training sessions.

January 15, 2008
American Legion 54
1125 East Columbia Ave.
Battle Creek

February 5, 2008
American Legion 42
1000 West Lawrence
Charlotte

March 11, 2008
Operation Unification
5216 N. Saginaw
Flint

April 2, 2008
K of C 6593
165 West Federal Hwy.
Roscommon

May 9, 2008
Boys and Girls Club of
Bay County
300 West Lafayette
Bay City

June 5, 2008
American Legion 409
6737 Allen Road
Allen Park

Compulsive gambling can be treated. If you, a family member, co-worker, or a friend need help or would like to learn more about problem gambling and the programs available, please call the Michigan 24-Hour Help Line at 1-800-270-7117.